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FALL ACTIVISM

Discontent

FOR those activists tired of having animal dealers from the World Wildlife Fund and friends treated with seeing the Sierra Club as deals with major corporate polluters, justice is around the corner. The NYC Environmental Justice Alliance consists of neighborhood and community groups confronting environmental hazards in their backyards. They fight for equity on environmental and transportation issues facing minority and low-income communities. They have worked to get the Franklin Avenue shuttle service upgraded and restored, and were involved in the campaign against the far bloc last spring.

led by Michelle DeBuss, the alliance has recently formed the Youth Environmental Justice Activist Network to teach young people how to organize around issues such as recycling and clean-air initiatives through leafleting and demonstrations. Working with the Labor Technical College of the carpenters' union, they provide free training in lead abatement, asbestos removal, and worker health and safety. DeBuss is encouraged that the city "builds environmental literacy in these communities without giving us options for disposal or to generating our waste." They have led some organizing campaigns and provide support for other groups, such as the South Bronx Green Alliance and West Harlem Environmental Action. Always looking for new members, they can be reached at 866-4120.

Progressive, more often than not, include spirit-minded youngsters who spend lots of time doing some serious talking, and not much else. So Something is a national organization that targets the under-30 crowd and provides training, guidance, and financial resources to young leaders committed to building their communities. By partnering with communities to set up *My Something* buses, young people work with a creative idea for a project—setting up a recycling program, rebuilding a playground, or access for \$500 grants. To build leadership skills, the group provides 15-week courses in computer skills, fundraising, and project management. Course participants then put their training into practice by working with their communities to develop specific proposals aimed at improving their neighborhoods. So Something can be reached at 523-1175. —*Margaret Barakat*

Eleven years ago, a group of squatters seized 25 city-owned buildings in a defiant test of City Hall's commitment to housing the homeless. The city refused, incorporating an ambitious home-repairing program that returned squatters into co-op owners, resulting in the rehabilitation of some 3,000 units to date.

Last summer, following the Giuliani's tax incentive program to corporations was not beneficial to the local communities, 50 protesters stormed Viacom's Midtown headquarters, calling for increased hiring. Viacom gave in to their demands, promising to tie job training to economic development programs.

These victories, and others like them, were

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in large part due to the the dedicated group of organizers that make up ACON, and their tactics, which they call "direct action."

ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, was born in 1970 in Little Rock, Arkansas, by a group of welfare mothers. A quarter of a century later, the movement has 75,000 members nationwide.

Although ACORN's methods are quite effective, Bertha Lewis, head organizer of the New York chapter, is not out to celebrate victory in the midst of battle. Indeed, last week ACORN was organizing another protest of Viacom for September 9, citing noncompliance with their original agreement.

Working to their cramped Hialeah office. Lewis carefully articulates ACOBN's special theme while describing the nature of community as "an act of the will, a choice, a way of action." "I'm the activist, what I say I do," he says. "I'm the organizer, I'm the doer, I'm the one who gets things done." Lewis says he will make a plan for the kind of action he will take, the steps, but not the finger-pointing or the quest for emphasis.

ACOBN has no specific agenda, its members insist. They would do anything that connects the community and offers its members a strategy. "It's not for us to tell them what to do. We provide the support, the energy of organizing the community is up to the people. Whether the goal is less crowded schools or more bridges."

In the past, a number of ACORN members have run for political office under the New Party banner. Bobi ACORN and the New Party believe that, at our point of development, we

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